

## Perceptions of Logistics Students on Logistics Study Abroad Programme: The Case of a Private Higher Education Institution in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

*This study presents hypothesis testing to examine the factors influencing undergraduate logistics student's perceptions on logistics study abroad programme. The objective of this study is to examine the perceptions of logistics students on logistics study abroad programme in term of pricing, quality, administrative easiness and third party influence. Multiple regression analysis was employed to explore the relationship between pricing, quality, administrative easiness, third party influence and student's perceptions on logistics study abroad programme. The results revealed that pricing, quality and third party influence have significant relationship with logistics study abroad programme perceptions ( $p < 0.05$ ) while administrative easiness has no significant relationship with logistics study abroad programme perceptions ( $p=0.347$ ). The findings which enhance our understanding of student's perceptions of pricing, quality, administrative easiness and third party influence on logistics study abroad programme in the context of a Malaysia private higher education institution have implications for several parties which include education institution as well as the stakeholders on the effort to re-shape institutional policy and implement suitable strategies, particularly stress on pricing aid, quality promotion and enhance third party influence, to make logistics study abroad programme accessible to more students.*

**Keywords:** logistics student, logistics study abroad programme, private higher education institution, Malaysia

### INTRODUCTION

Logistics started to gain popularity and gradually became a formal area of study in colleges and universities in the 1970s (Lancioni, Forman & Smith, 2001). The number of logistics related programmes being offered in colleges and universities around the world are growing (Lancioniet al., 2001). Besides, van Hoek (2001) noted industry demands for logistics graduates are increasing yearly. The increment is due to globalization which increases the need for a firm to make logistics-related decisions (Sheffi & Klaus, 1998). Now, logistics programme has been in growing recognition to produce competent logisticians for effective supply chains management and other logistics-related activities (Lancioniet al., 2001).

According to Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Malaysia government has targeted an increase in logistics activities by more than two to four folds, including sea-carrying cargoes, air cargoes and railway freight cargoes by the year 2020 under Malaysia Third Industrial Master Plan (2006-2020). It is doubtless that Malaysia logistics industry is becoming significant in the international trade brought by globalization. In the view of this, there is a need for Malaysia higher education institutions (HEIs) to produce knowledgeable and competent logistics graduates in order to keep pace with the development of international trade (Ali, Jaafar, & Mohamad, 2008).

However, Malaysia logistics education is still found not satisfying and it was claimed that it could not provide competent and logistics graduates who sufficient with the knowledge and skills in the logistics industry (Erturgut & Soyseker, 2011; AbTalib & Daud, 2011). AbTalib and Daud (2011) suggested that logistics higher education in Malaysia should have more logistics-related twinning programs or dual degree award in partnership with the renowned overseas higher education institutions as an effort to overcome the challenges and realising the goal of supplying more logistics graduates with well-educated talents into the industry (AbTalib & Daud, 2011). Further, according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014), Malaysia international outbound student mobility has been increasing over the years and this indicates that there is a growing interest in studying abroad among students in Malaysia.

Student's perception towards logistics study abroad programme is a well-researched topic, based on the presumption that perception is closely associated to attitude (Pickens, 2005). This understanding can help university to better promote the study abroad programmes and help making study abroad programme accessible to more students, hence increasing study abroad participation rate. Moreover, study on perceptions of Malaysian undergraduate students on logistics study abroad programme has yielded low in literature. The study conducted in foreign country is deemed inapplicable to Malaysian context because demographic backgrounds affect one's perceptions. Therefore, an empirical study to investigate Malaysian student's perceptions needed to be done.

It is clear that the study main objective is to find out the key factors affecting undergraduate logistics student's perceptions on logistics study abroad programme. This study is to examine logistics study abroad programme (LSAP) perceptions in terms of pricing, quality, administrative easiness and third party influence. The following study question is addressed in this study: Does pricing, quality, administrative easiness, third party influence associated with LSAP perceptions?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Pricing**

Cost of studying abroad consists of direct cost such as tuition fees, living expenses and other indirect factors such as opportunity cost incurred when studying at local university or not studying at all (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). An increased in tuition fees and living expenses are one of the financial constraints for international students that leads to low participation rate (Loberg, 2012; Steele, 2008). It is proven by Neill (2009) in which the enrolment demand declines with an increasing in tuition fees.

A great majority of Asian students and their parents perceived that scholarship and financial aids are an important consideration, without it, the study abroad path will never be possible for them (Cheung, Yuen, Yuen, & Cheng, 2010). Therefore, it is important for students to be financial viable to support themselves as well as their family in a foreign country (Singh, Zain, & Jamil, 2011) and this feeling of security and stability would lead to their academic success (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005).

### **Quality**

Students perceived quality in the study abroad institution, including reputation and the quality of academic staff, an important aspect when they consider study abroad programme (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Image of the country, city or the university influences student's study abroad decision (Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006). Reputation and perceived education quality are among the factors most influential to student's study abroad decision

(for example, see Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010; Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010; Maringe, 2006; Soutar & Turner, 2002). Students perceived a good study destination are country which has high international profile and is reputable for quality education services as well as well recognized by the source country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

In fact, a university's quality is depends on the relationship it builds with its students and via its service delivery, rather than on its facilities (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010; Price, Matzdorf, Smith, & Agahi, 2003). Institution's attractiveness affects student's satisfaction and it would help in building the university's reputation when they graduated from the university and act as ambassadors spreading positive word-of-mouth (Engelke, 2008).

### **Administrative Easiness**

Administrative easiness can be referred as the ease of which the students are able to find or access information on the host country as a study destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Poor administrative easiness such as excessive red tape, slowness of and the unnecessary multiplication of people, rules and forms, could negatively impact students' intention to enrol (Wagner & Fard, 2009). Student support services tend to impact the success of distance education, which include helpdesks, well-trained administrative staff, student networks and appropriate facilities (Abel, 2005). Faculties at higher education institutions which demonstrate timely, interactive and knowledgeable factors are predictors toward students' satisfaction (Endres, Chowdhury, Frye, & Hurtubisin, 2009).

Since most of the university, especially those in the private sector, are service-based, they need to understand the needs of students by focusing on the study of factors which students perceived influential to their university choice process (Kusumawati, 2010). This is because by knowing student's needs well, the university can design their service delivery accordingly to attract more students from local or international to study in their institutions (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010).

### **Third Party Influence**

Student's decision-making process for study abroad programme is influence by third party influences and recommendations, including family members, relatives, friends and professors (for example, see Eder *et al.*, 2010; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Chen & Zimitat, 2006). Even though the final decision to study abroad is mainly decided by students themselves, their family members, relatives and friends influence them significantly by providing information and suggestions (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also suggested that personal recommendations or word-of-mouth referrals of formal alumni is one of the most significant factors in promoting study abroad programme. For instance, parents and relatives who have graduated from the university or had visited the country with great experiences are likely to recommend it to their children, other family members or friends. Besides, the positive international experiences of faculty members or professors are likely to motivate their students to join study abroad programme (Miller, 2011).

### **Logistics Study Abroad Programme Perceptions (LSAP Perceptions)**

LSAP perceptions is defined as the process by which the students interpret logistics study abroad programme and organize the information in a way which is meaningful to them in accordance to their own background and experiences (Pickens, 2005). Cory and Martinez (2008) found that majority of student's perceptions were altered positively after they had gone through study abroad experiences. This indicates that perceptions of students prior to study abroad experience could not be true or different from reality.

The college choice theory proposed by Hanson and Litten (1982) which consists of predisposition, exploratory and application/matriculation stage provides a theoretically and empirically grounded approach to examine the range of factors that influence the decision-making process of students about study abroad decision. Besides, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) model emphasizes that the decision to study abroad is influenced by “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors refer to the characteristics of the home country environment which is considered by students as unsatisfactory leading them to consider study abroad programme. On the other hand, pull factors refer to what intending students may consider to be attractive features of a study abroad country or institution. Figure 1 shows the framework used in this study.

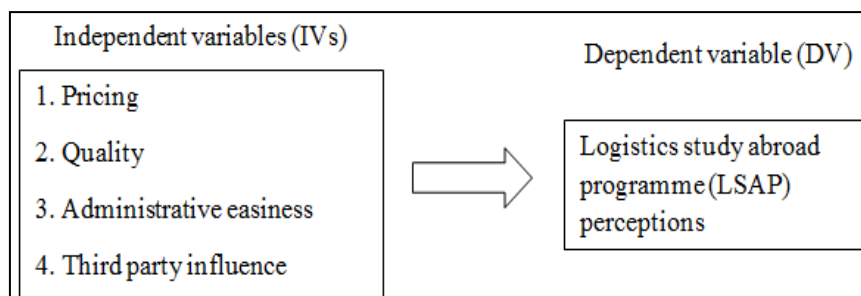


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The following hypotheses are developed:

H1: There is a relationship between pricing and LSAP perceptions.

H2: There is a relationship between quality and LSAP perceptions.

H3: There is a relationship between administrative easiness and LSAP perceptions.

H4: There is a relationship between third party influence and LSAP perceptions.

## METHODOLOGY

Self-administrated questionnaire was employed in this study. Each of the respondents was presented with a set of questionnaire containing a list of items associated with pricing, quality, administrative easiness, third party influences and LSAP perceptions. Respondents were asked to choose items best represents themselves on a five-point Likert scale with 5 being “Strongly Agree” and 1 “Strongly Disagree”. The instrument consists of 3 sections with a total of 8 questions covering demographic profile of respondents, 5 questions for each of the independent variables and lastly 9 questions for measuring LSAP perceptions.

A total of 146 undergraduate logistics students were selected from one of the private higher education institution (PHEI) in Klang Valley, Malaysia to participate in the study by means of convenience sampling, 134 responded to the invitation, giving a response rate of 91.8 percent. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method which is applied by randomly stopping logistics students for the survey. It is cost-effective and its simplicity of sampling allows data collection to be facilitated in a short period of time. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 was used to analyse the data collected for the purpose of hypothesis testing and demographic analysis. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis was used because this study involves more than one independent variable to explain variance in the dependent variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

**RESULTS**

From the 134 respondents in this study, majority of students are aged between 21 to 23 years old (56.7%), followed by those ranging from 18 to 20 years old (35.8%) and those 24 years old and above (7.5%) are the least among the 134 respondents. There were 81 (60.4%) male and 53 (39.6%) are females respondents. Among the 134 numbers of respondents, 116 (86.6%) of them are Malaysian and non-Malaysian students contributing to about 18 (13.4%). Respondents who is in logistics diploma programme are consisting of 35 (26.1%) and the remaining 99 (73.9%) of respondents are enrolled in logistics Bachelor Degree programme. About 59 of the respondents are in the second year of their study (44.0%), followed by 47 third year students (35.1%) and minority of about 28 (20.9%) number of them are in the first year of study. Most of the parents of respondents gained their education until secondary level (57; 42.5%), undergraduate educational level consists of 35.8% (48), followed by postgraduate level (25; 18.7%) and 3% (4) of the respondent’s parents are non-educated. More than half (96; 71.6%) of the parents of respondents are earning moderate level of income, 19.4% (26) of them are earning low while only 9% (12) of them are earning high level of income. About 89 (66.4%) of them are aspired to study abroad while around 45 (33.6%) of them are not aspired to study abroad.

Validity of the questionnaire was established through pilot study involving 20 logistics students. Their feedbacks were used to verify the content of the questionnaire developed for this study. For reliability test, Cronbach Alpha scores of the measures reached the acceptable range of 0.70 and thus it has high reliability. A bell-shaped histogram was formed for each of the measures and the skewness (-0.456 to 0.498) and kurtosis (-0.238 to 0.844) values falls within the range of +1 and -1, indicating normality assumption was met.

The study hypotheses were tested using a multiple regression analysis. From Table 1, the R-Square measures the percentage of the variation in the dependent variable (DV) which was explained by the variations in the independent variables (IVs). It can be seen that in this model, the four independent variables explained 39.7% of the variation in LSAP perceptions.

**Table 1. Model Summary**

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	.620 <sup>a</sup>	.397	.378	4.86095

Predictors: (Constant), Third-party influence, Pricing, Quality, Administrative Easiness

Dependent Variable: Undergraduates logistics student perceptions on logistics study abroad programme (LSAP perceptions)

The coefficient table summarizes the results of the regression equation. Column B in the unstandardized coefficient column gives the values of the regression coefficients and the constant, which is the expected value of the DV when the values of the IV equal to zero. Hence, based on this Table 3, the equation for the regression line is:

$$\text{Student's perceptions} = 8.589 + 0.476(\text{pricing}) + 0.471 (\text{quality}) + 0.134 (\text{administrative easiness}) + 0.407 (\text{third party influence}) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Standardized coefficient is usually done to answer the question of which of the IV has a greater effect on the DV in a multiple regression analysis. We can conclude that administrative easiness (0.072) is not the factor which influencing undergraduates’ student perceptions on LSAP because the value is not as influencing as compared to the other three (3) factors. Quality is showing the highest value (0.323) among the factors and hence, it is the

most important factor in influencing undergraduates to choose LSAP, followed by third party influence (0.292) and pricing (0.281) that affects undergraduates to choose LSAP.

The t-values in the coefficients table indicate the variable's statistical significance. In general, a t-value of 2 or higher indicates statistical significance. In Table 4.11, all the t-values for pricing (3.784), quality (4.151) and third party influence (3.641) are greater than 2 which mean they are statistically significance. While for administrative easiness, the t-value is lower than 2, which is 0.944 indicating that it is non-significance.

The Sig. level used in this study is 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ). Table 4.11 shows that the (IVs) pricing, quality, and third-party influence which have Sig. value of less than 5% indicating a significant relationship with undergraduates students perceptions on LSAP. Three factors include pricing, quality and third party influence show a relationship ( $p=0.000$ ) with undergraduates logistics student perceptions on LSAP. The Sig. value of administrative easiness which is more than 5% ( $p=0.347$ ) showing no significant relationship with undergraduate students perceptions on LSAP. Hence, H1, H2 and H4 are accepted while H3 is rejected.

**Table 2. Coefficients**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
(Constant)	8.589	2.867		2.996	.003
Pricing	.476	.126	.281	3.784	.000
Quality	.471	.113	.323	4.151	.000
Administrative Easiness	.134	.142	.072	0.944	.347
Third-party Influence	.407	.112	.292	3.641	.000

Dependent Variable: Undergraduates logistics student perceptions on logistics study abroad programme (LSAP perceptions)

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study is to examine relationship between pricing, quality, administrative easiness and third party influence and student's perceptions in a PHEI in Malaysia. Four IVs being identified as the factors affecting student's perceptions on logistic study abroad program in order to achieve the first study question: Does pricing, quality, administrative easiness, third party influence associated with LSAP perceptions? From the findings of multiple regression analysis, it shows only three IVs has significant relationship with the LSAP perceptions. The three IVs consist of pricing, quality and third party influence. While for administrative easiness, it shows no significant to influencing undergraduate logistics student's perceptions on LSAP. This conclude that the administrative easiness is either unrelated or do not have influences to logistics students perceptions on LSAP.

Similar with previous studies, pricing is deemed important factor affecting student's perceptions, which have been found out by Loberg (2012), Neill (2009) and Steele (2008). Pricing has become more important when it comes to studying abroad because it usually incurred higher cost as compared to local studies. In term of pricing, students also take into

consideration the currency exchange rate, the standard of living at overseas as well as the opportunity to work part time in order to earn pocket money to lower the burden of their family who supporting them. Hence, pricing showed a relationship ( $p=.000$ ) with undergraduates logistics student perceptions on logistics study abroad programme.

Besides, quality is deemed significantly important in this study. The finding is supported by previous study where a number of quality-related factors especially quality of study abroad destination are an important aspect when students consider study abroad programme (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In addition, few elements under study abroad destination quality were further supported by the other researcher's study, such as university image, teaching quality, reputation, its infrastructure, library services, computer facilities, university's location as well as the programme structure and quality are deemed influential to student's perceptions (Tavares, Justino & Amaral, 2008). Hence, quality showed a relationship ( $p=.000$ ) with undergraduates logistics student perceptions on logistics study abroad programme.

The variable of administrative easiness ( $p=0.347$ ) did not indicate significant relationship towards student's perceptions on logistics study abroad programme. In this study, logistic students did not consider administrative easiness as the main selection criteria even though precious studies as shown in Literature Review indicated the importance of administrative easiness factor as an important supporting service (Abel, 2005). In contrast to the study done by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), the ease of which the students are able to access information on study abroad destination seemed to have less impact on student's decision to study abroad.

In this study, third party influence ( $p=.000$ ) deemed to have a significant relationship to student's perception on logistics study abroad programme. This finding is supported by the previous studies discussed in Literature Review section which stressed that student's decision-making process for study abroad programme is influence by third party influences and recommendations, such as family members, relatives, friends and professors (Eder *et al.*, 2010; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Chen & Zimitat, 2006).

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A major limitation of this study is the small sample size ( $n=134$ ) which result in lower generalizability of population of study. This sample size was used because of time constraint for submission date of this project and insufficient funds to distribute a large number of study questionnaires. Besides, the use of convenience sampling method might cause sampling bias because the sample is drawn from a small part of the target population which is less generalizability.

Therefore, a larger sample size would be recommended in the future study to achieve higher accuracy results and more stable estimates. It should also increase the geographical area for the study to have higher confidence level of results by distributing the questionnaires to wider range of people in other PHEIs which offers logistics programme such as Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST), University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), SEGi University, and Raffles University Iskandar (RUI), instead of mostly respondent from UCSI University. Besides that, it is also recommended to explore more possible factor that may influence logistics undergraduates to choose logistics study abroad programme so that these possible factor could play important in the evaluation undergraduates to choose logistic related programs and for school management to tackle the factors which student is considerate about in choosing logistic related programs.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, this study reports on a hypothesis testing of the relationship between pricing, quality, administrative easiness, third party influence and logistics student's perceptions on LSAP based on a PHEI in Malaysia. This study endeavours to make both theoretical and practical contribution to the literature. It also contains several implications for further study. The findings enhance our understanding of the relationship of these factors (IVs: pricing, quality, administrative easiness and third party influence; DV: LSAP perceptions) in order to increase the LSAP participation rate in producing logisticians with global exposure. The findings stressed the need to focus more on aspects such as pricing or financial issue; overseas logistics programme quality promotion and the education of third party on the awareness of LSAP. The findings could also prescribe potential practical implications for HEIs to shape institutional policy and implement suitable strategies, particularly stress on pricing aid, quality promotion and enhance third party influence, to make LSAP accessible to more students.

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